

Historical Place Names of British Columbia

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CAPTAIN VANCOUVER

The study of place-nomenclature has received little attention in a new country like this. Capt. John T. Walbran's excellent book on Coast names and Prof. Ganong's on the place names of the Atlantic seaboard being among the most valuable publications on the subject.

Place names form a permanent register of the course and events of a country's history, marking its successive periods; as in the case of British Columbia, Indian, Spanish and British. It offers an attractive field for investigation, directs one's attention to local affairs, and is a connecting link between the study of history and geography.

To the average Canadian and American the place names of Great Britain seem dignified and pleasing, so that he has adopted very many of them; those of Italy seem musical, those of China awkward, and those of our own West in many cases, absurd.

The Capitals of the different Provinces of Canada, with two exceptions, have British names; three of them, Charlottetown, Fredericton, and Victoria, being named in honor of members of the British Royal family.

The importance of mere sound in conveying impressions is well known to every writer, and Longfellow has used some of the grandest of them in "Hiawatha," and Milton in "Paradise Lost."

In the early days of the Spanish occupation the whole Western Seaboard of North America was known as the "Californias." Sir Francis Drake paid a "friendly" visit to the Spanish possessions of the Pacific Coast in 1578-9, and sailed as far north as Queen Charlotte Islands, calling the country New Albion. About two hundred years later Capt. George Vancouver divided the Province into three divisions, New Hanover, New Cornwall and New Georgia, and Vancouver Island was named Quadra-Vancouver, to mark the friendly relations existing between the

Spanish Commander Quadra and the English explorer. The central interior of the Province was named by Simon Fraser, New Caledonia. This Province was named British Columbia in 1858 by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria.

Capt. George Vancouver did the earliest survey work of importance on this coast and named many of our mountains, islands, and waterways. He left England in 1790 with two ships, the "Discovery" and "Chatham," and arrived on the Pacific Coast in 1792. Cape Mudge, Puget Sound, Johnstone Strait, Whidbey Island, Broughton Island and Strait were named after his officers. Lieut. Baker, Captain Vancouver's second officer, was the first Britisher to get a view of Mount Baker, which bears his name. Mount Rainier was named after Vice-Admiral Peter Rainier, a famous British Naval Officer. It is interesting to note that one of the few living descendants of the Rainier family lives in Vancouver. A few years ago there was a strong agitation in the Western States to change the name of Mount Rainier to Mount Tacoma, owing to Admiral Rainier's activities against the U. S. Navy.

In the month of June Capt. Vancouver arrived at Point Grey, which he named after his friend, Capt. George Grey, R.N. He then sailed through the narrows as far up the Inlet as Roach Point about opposite Barnet, being accompanied by a party of fifty Indians in canoes. He named the Inlet Burrard Canal, after Sir Harry Burrard, R.N. There is no evidence that he ever landed on the site of the great city which a hundred years later was to bear his name. He then sailed north, landing at Point Atkinson, named after a particular friend, Capt. Thos. Atkinson, Master of Lord Nelson's ship, "Victory," at the battle of Trafalgar; Bowen Island, after Rear Admiral James Bowen, and Gambier Island after Admiral Lord Gambier. Howe Sound takes its name from Admiral Earl Howe, who won a great naval battle at Brest "on the glorious first of June," 1794. When Capt. Richards, R.N. made the survey of Howe Sound in 1859-60 he followed up Vancouver's name by giving all the principal islands, passages, and mountains in and around the Sound names of the ships and officers engaged in Lord Howe's victory. In like manner Jervis Inlet is a record of the battle of St. Vincent (1797) when Jervis and Nelson destroyed the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent. After proceeding as far North as Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver sailed for Nootka Sound on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, in order to meet the Spanish commander, Quadra, to take over the sovereignty of this Province on behalf of the British Crown. The meeting of Vancouver, Quadra, and old Chief Maquinna, is an interesting chapter in the history of British Columbia, the influence of a few glasses of wine on the wily old chief being one of the features. Nootka is an Indian name which signifies to dance round in a circle. A dispute took place between Great Britain and Spain over the priority of discovery of this place which nearly led to a war between the two Nations in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Reference has already been made to the fact that Queen Victoria named this Province. The capital